

Easier by Iris Violetta

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Friendship, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Characters: Dustin H., Eleven/Jane H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-07-09 13:42:03

Updated: 2019-07-09 13:42:03

Packaged: 2019-12-12 18:50:49

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,009

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Dustin and El now have more in common than they thought.

Easier

They find out the news on a Thursday in August, barely a month after everything happened. The Party is sitting around Mike's basement, trying to find any semblance of normal, when Will speaks up and changes everything again.

"We're moving."

All heads turn to him. He's sitting on the bottom step, arms wrapped around himself. El stands next to him, leaning against the railing, pointedly looking away.

"What?" Max asks.

Will clears his throat. "My mom is selling the house. It goes up for sale next week."

"So like, you're moving to a bigger house?" Lucas asks, but it's obvious from his voice that it's just wishful thinking.

Will shakes his head. El keeps staring at the carpet, tangling the blue hairband in her fingers, as she's taken to doing lately.

"Illinois."

It's like a vacuum has opened up, sucking away all the air. Dustin feels his stomach sinking, something he's been feeling all too often now. As he glances at the others he sees Lucas clenching his jaw and Max trying - and failing - to keep the corners of her mouth from pulling down. He sees the resigned heartbreak on Mike's face and realizes, *he already knows*.

"Me too," El adds in a low voice, still refusing to look up, and the last piece of the puzzle clicks into place.

Lucas gives a simple "oh," which suffices for the rest of them and it's quiet for a moment until Will speaks again, forcing his voice to be a little steadier.

"Can we just do something fun now? Like anything else?"

And they nod and Dustin suggests they play Monopoly and for a while that's it.

Later that afternoon, when Lucas pulls Mike and Will into an argument about the game they've just finished and Max goes into the bathroom, Dustin sits down next to El in the corner. He's been meaning to talk to her for a while now, but with this news he has even more to say. It all feels a little eerie.

"Did I ever tell you why my mom and I moved to Hawkins?"

El shakes her head, eyes inquisitive as always. He keeps his gaze on the far wall and tries to find the right words.

"My dad died. When I was in third grade. My mom, she wanted a fresh start and she found a job in Hawkins so we moved here that summer."

Her lips part and the smallest wrinkle appears between her brows. Dustin knows she's confused; she probably never knew about his dad. He doesn't talk about it much, except for with his mom. It's not that his friends don't want to hear about it, it's just not the same with them. They never knew his dad. To them, he's a faraway ghost. To Dustin, he's always nearby, just below the surface.

The jokes he told, his endless nicknames for the cats, his bear hugs. He gave the best hugs.

"Your dad?"

"Yeah. He, uh...he got sick. Cancer. It was really quick, like a month and he was, he was..."

"Gone."

"Yeah, gone. It was really hard for my mom and me, to still be in that house, so we ended up moving here." He pauses, mouth creeping into a half-smile. "And you know what? It was actually really great. Moving. I mean, I was scared and I missed my dad like hell, but there were all these new distractions and it kind of helped. And of course I met the guys."

El bites the inside of her cheek, clearly mulling over her next question. "Do you still talk to your friends from before?"

He stammers a bit. "Uh...no. But you know what? They weren't my *best* friends. I met better people here."

El shifts her gaze to her hands. "I don't want to meet better people."

It's barely a whisper and he almost misses it. He realizes that his pep talk is going horribly awry.

"Okay, wait, that's not really what I wanted to say," he rambles as he waves his hands around. "I just mean that moving was good for me and, and maybe it'll be good for you but not like, not in the same way of course, like we're obviously still gonna be your friends and we're not gonna forget you and you won't forget us and-"

"Dustin." El stops him with a pointed look.

He takes a breath and calms himself before continuing. "We'll all talk all the time, thanks to the Cerebro. And if I can make it work with Suzie-"

"Suzie-poo?" She interrupts. Her eyes stay wide and innocent but Dustin can see past them.

He narrows his own eyes. "*Suzie*. If I can make it work with her then we can make it with you guys." He pauses and his voice lowers a bit. "Mike will make it work."

"I know. It's...hard." She seems to be having a harder time picking her words than usual. "It, it..."

"It sucks." It's the only way to describe it.

She nods and lets out a deep sigh. "It sucks."

"It *really* sucks," Dustin continues. "But the stuff with your dad? It gets better. It's always gonna hurt, but it'll get easier."

"What do you do, when it hurts too much?"

"Usually I talk to my mom because she understands. We'll talk about our favorite memories of him, and it helps. Sometimes I talk to him, at night, when I can't sleep. Like, I dunno if he can hear me but it feels nice to talk to him anyway."

A ghost of a smile appears on El's lips. "Maybe I will try that."

"And you can talk to me, if you want. Sometimes it's nice just to have someone who kinda gets it."

She nods again and they fall into a comfortable silence, listening to the sounds of the others' ongoing argument in the background. El reaches over and gently grabs his hand.

"Dustin?"

"Yeah?"

"You're a good friend." She squeezes his hand and he squeezes back.

"You too, El. You too."